Street Haven Newsletter

Spring 1997

Bringing Hope & Humanity

A WOMAN OF DISTINCTION

Peggy Ann Walpole has been honoured with numerous awards, including the: Ontario Medal of Good Citizenship; Order of Canada; Merit Award of Toronto; Levesque Award; and Pro Ecclesia Et Pontifice. Now the YWCA has added the 1997 Women of Distinction Award to this list, recognizing a woman who, for over thirty years, has been bringing hope and humanity to the lives of the women on the streets of Toronto.

"She works with the most difficult population of damaged souls, and she never gives up on anyone," stated Toronto Star Feature Writer Judy Steed on Peggy Ann Walpole.

Excerpts of the feature article Judy wrote on Grant House and "Sandy" appeared in our Winter newsletter. Judy and "Sandy" then went on to nominate Peggy Ann for the YWCA Women of Distinction Award.

All who come into contact with Peggy Ann cannot help but recognize her outstanding achievements and her commitment to women. She is a voice of conscience in the community.

SPRING CAMPAIGN FOR 1997.

This newsletter marks our **"Spring Campaign"** for 1997. These are very difficult but challenging times – government cutbacks come with no warning – the end result is that potential donors like yourselves are besieged from all sides.

It is therefore my job to convince you that Street Haven is worthy of as much support as you can offer – and we are worthy! Street Haven is going into its thirty-third year of operation. Literally thousands of women have been helped through our organization. The problem is the list of women in need, be it emotionally or physically, is not getting any shorter. In this affluent city of ours – we cannot let this continue.

The provincial government pulled all funding for the drop-in centre. We are still operating – under very difficult circumstances – but it is a vitally needed program on which Street Haven based all other services over the years.

We need to make you - and others - aware that overnight hostel beds are not enough for women with health, mental illness and addiction issues. Street Haven has twenty-two beds open all day and night. Meals are served and many programs such as arts and crafts; spirituality; literacy; computer training; clothing and counselling are provided. Additionally, there are many more women staying at other hostels or on the streets who use Street Haven's services. However the numbers are far too great for us to handle the extra load without your help. Please give careful consideration to supporting this program.

Grant House, our long term residential treatment centre for women with addictions is also clearly in need of your help. The program is irreplaceable! It has seen many women graduate and leave with their whole lives turned around. Grant House is a good investment for you – for anyone – to give $10.00, $1,000.00 or $100,000.00.

I will be happy to tell you more about any one or all of our programs whether it is the Drop-in, the Hostel, Grant House, Joubert House, Literacy, Addiction Case Management or one of our long term housing projects.

Our Campaign Goal is $100,000.00. Please call me for further information, Peggy Ann at 967-6060.

It is my pleasure to announce our new Honorary Patron The Honourable Hilary Weston, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. The Weston family has been extremely generous to and interested in Street Haven for many years .

LOOK INSIDE

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- *Profiles*
- *Turning the Tide of Violence*
- *Thats the Spirit*

The Hostel

The hostel provides emergency shelter for twenty-two women. Along with receiving food, clothing and a bed, the women can access support and counselling in a safe, non-judgemental environment.

This winter, Street Haven participated in the Emergency Weather Response program, adding an additional six temporary beds for homeless women on brutally cold nights. The hostel alone sheltered fifteen women on nights that they would have otherwise spent in the cold and possibly ending up freezing to death.

Many of the women who came in from the cold were considered "the hard to serve." Women, who from years of abuse, being on the streets and through mental illness are distrustful of the hostel system. Fortunately, with patience and understanding some stayed on – slowly learning to accept shelter, food, and support, through the hostel and drop-in services.

It is always Street Haven's hope that the programs we offer will help women make the transition from the streets to independence.

The Drop-In

The drop-in is the centre of Street Haven. As well as offering a wealth of services, it provides a much needed sense of community for women.

At the drop-in a woman can have a meal, use the phone, watch a favourite TV show, be tutored by one of our volunteers, take part in computer training, crafts and other recreational activities. In addition, there are groups for living skills, abused women, spirituality and addictions.

Support is offered in a variety of areas from crisis intervention to budget counselling and everything in between. But most importantly, the drop-in offers marginalized women **a place** to practice social skills, make a friend, and be safe in an often impersonal city.

As one woman from the drop-in put it **"You always remember my name here, I feel important."**

Joubert House

Joubert House celebrates its tenth year of operation in 1997. Many women throughout those years have sought out and enjoyed the independent living along with the ongoing support of staff and volunteers. All of the residents suffer from some form of mental illness and have been homeless prior to coming to Joubert House.

This program helps to bridge the gaps left in their lives by their very difficult pasts. Women who leave the program, successfully or otherwise, are followed up by the staff in the community.

Grant House

Grant House is a unique addiction program in that it is long term, residential and is for women only.

The women Grant House serves, for the most part, also have long histories of street life, sexual and physical abuse and frequent conflicts with the law as well as their addictions. A woman's stay at Grant House may often be the first safe and supportive **place** she has had in many years. The counsellors work intensely with each woman – helping them work on their addiction issues, and setting realistic goals for the future.

"Sandy"

A prostitute and addict who used Street Haven's drop-in centre for years, Sandy has finally beat the odds. After graduating from Grant House, Street Haven's long term addiction treatment centre, she is like a new person. Gone is the life of maintaining an addiction through prostitution, of the brutality of the street. Sandy now lives in a safe, comfortable apartment. With the help of the literacy program at Street Haven, she is registered in full-time upgrading at an adult high school in order to complete her grade 12 diploma. Sandy continues to use the literacy program for help with her homework; in particular the computer resources.

"Kathy"

Like Sandy, Kathy had hit bottom before she turned her life around. Kathy too was a prostitute with a dangerous heroin addiction. For her though, it took a near brush with death to find the courage to change her life. Now, after graduating from Grant House and beating her addiction, Kathy is giving back to her community. She works for an organization that assists women and men in leaving prostitution and drug addiction. She is now using many of the communication and writing skills she learned in the literacy group at Grant House.

Ex-prostitute praised for overcoming drugs

"You should be very proud," judge tells her

A veteran Peel Region judge has congratulated a 26-year-old former stripper and prostitute for turning her life around by overcoming her drug addiction while awaiting trial for stabbing a customer.

"You should be very proud of yourself for your absolutely remarkable turnabout," Mr. Justice Kenneth Langdon yesterday told Dorothy Cutajar when releasing her on a conditional sentence.

"Let me express my admiration for what you've done with your life."

She had pleaded guilty to aggravated assault.

The judge ordered her to perform 100 hours of community service by counselling others at Street Light, a provincially funded Toronto organization assisting women who want to get out of prostitution.

"Those who are there are far more likely to listen to you, (someone) who has been there, than to somebody with 15 degrees in social work who has not been there," Langdon said.

Cutajar's parents separated when she was 12 and her mother gave her crack cocaine when she was 20, the judge noted.

Cutajar drifted into stripping at bars and prostitution to support her drug habit, defence lawyer Terry McKay said.

"It was a tragic, tragic start from which many don't recover," Langdon said, adding that in his 20 years on the bench Cutajar is one of the few who rather than promising to reform **"have done their time up front."**

Cutajar had spent three months in pretrial custody for stabbing a 67-year-old man in his Mississauga home on Aug. 1, 1995 – in an argument over owed money – when she decided to do something about her four-year addiction to crack cocaine, McKay said.

A judge gave her a break, the lawyer added, by granting her bail on condition she go to a treatment centre.

Toronto Star article written by Farrell Crook

Dorothy Cutajar was a resident of Grant House from Nov 7, 1995 to July 4, 1996

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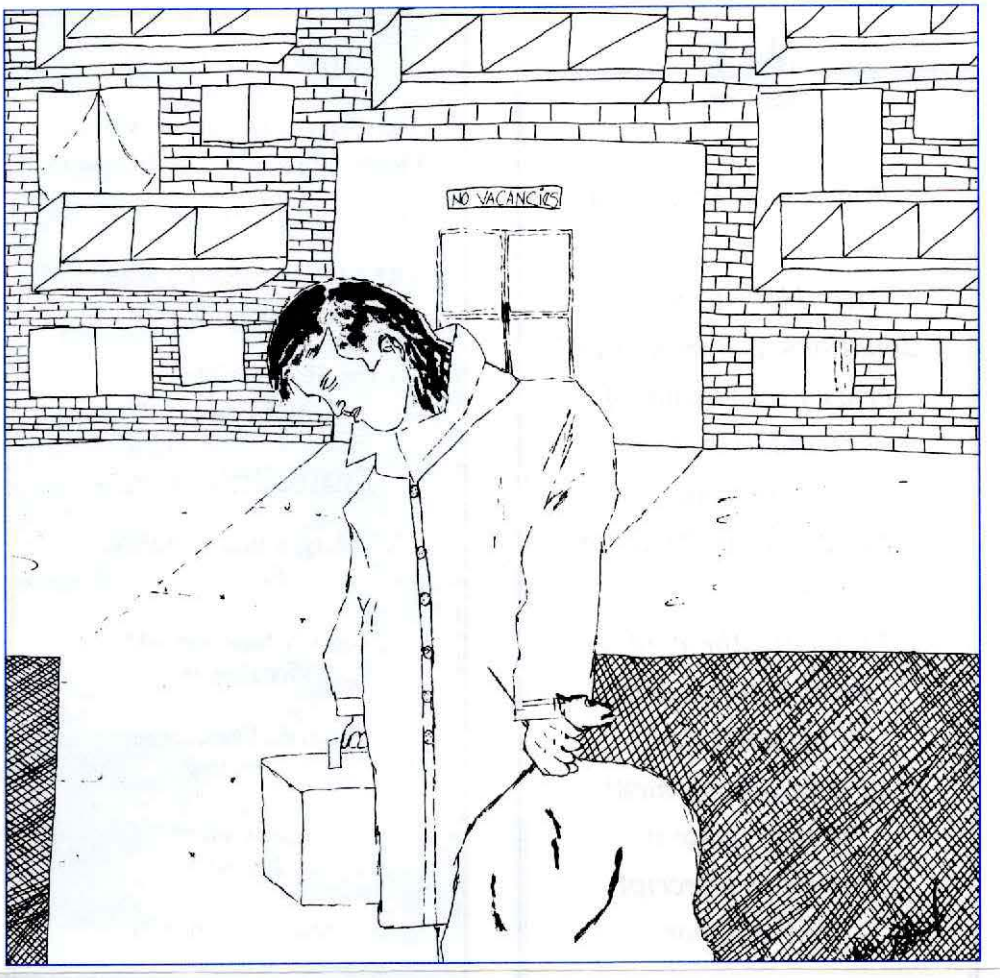


This poster won an award in 1987 - "The International Year of the Homeless".

Turning the Tide of Violence

"Breaking the Cycle of Violence" – this is a peer support group for women who have experienced violent relationships. The goal of the group is to empower women so that they can make choices not to be assaulted and to assume responsibility for their own lives. Videos, discussions and printed material are used as teaching aids.

The group offers safety, confidentiality and participants can access individual counselling. One woman stated the group was helpful **"knowing I am never alone and that the group is available to help even after the meetings have finished."** Another said, **"I have learned not to blame myself for another's action."**

Housing

In 1987 Street Haven initiated two supportive housing projects. There was great hope Street Haven would finally be able to offer the women we serve safe, affordable and permanent housing opportunities. Today, Street Haven provides housing for twenty-five women in two apartment buildings. Many of the residents "graduated" from other Street Haven programs and are taking their final steps towards full independence, self-fulfillment and community involvement.

Even though its been ten long years since the "International Year of the Homeless" sadly the number of homeless on our streets is increasing steadily.

Addiction Case Management Program

Case managers work with women in the community who suffer with addictions. Each carries a caseload of about fifteen clients, serving a very diverse group of women and offering a unique program. They meet where the clients feel comfortable and safe – this may be a coffee shop, a park bench, their own home, or Street Haven's counselling office. The commitment to the client is long term – as long as she needs it and wants the support and guidance.

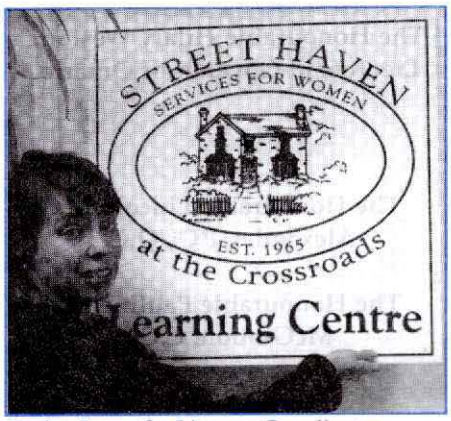
Learning Resources Program

The women we see lack basic skills in writing, math and computers so necessary for survival in today's world. Recognizing the problem Street Haven began a literacy program eight years ago. The following year, "International Literacy Year", brought world and local attention to the problems and issues of illiteracy, reinforcing what we were trying to do.

Today, the Learning Resources Program provides a safe place for women to learn and discover new skills. The program offers help with reading, writing, math, computers and job search skills. Women learn at their own pace in small groups or one-to-one with a volunteer tutor. The program is open to all the women who use Street Haven's services - the Hostel, Drop-in, Grant House, Joubert House and Housing.

Plans are ahead to expand this program significantly by developing a women's computer Resource Centre, taking place in a Metro owned building previously occupied by welfare. This project and others developed by existing women's agencies will be sharing this space.

New Learning Centre Opens



Janine Luce, the Literacy Coordinator

This past winter Street Haven Learning Centre moved from the attic of 87 Pembroke St. to much more spacious accommodation at the Adelaide Resource Centre for Women

The move was made even more exciting by The Harold Crabtree Foundation's generous donation to purchase new computer equipment. The Learning Centre now offers training in the latest software with access to the Internet. The program helps over 100 women each year learn basic computer skills and assists with developing resumes, cover letters and other job search skills. The attendance at the computer training groups has more than doubled over the past year.

The program offers English upgrading from basic literacy to high school level and basic math upgrading. Women learn at their own pace in small groups or one-on-one with a trained volunteer tutor. Women can join the program at any time. The Street Haven Learning Centre offers a safe and supportive environment for women to learn new skills.

1-900-565-4438 (GIFT)

STREET HAVEN CELEBRATES 34 YEARS

Will you help by giving us a special donation of $34.00, representing $1.00 a year as we enter our 34th year of operation!

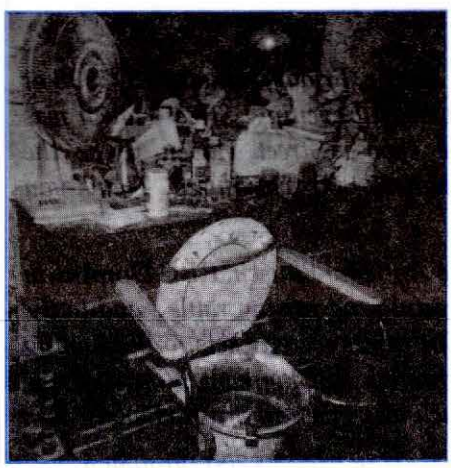
DIAL
1-900-565-GIFT (4438)

A donation of $34.00 will be made to Street Haven. Your donation will appear on your telephone bill. A receipt will be mailed to you direct from Street Haven after the donation has been processed through Bell Canada.

The Clean-up Project

Can you imagine living in conditions like this? Even the front-line staff - who have pretty much seen everything - found it hard to believe such living conditions existed. The photos were being shown by a city official as part of a presentation to have Street Haven take over a special cleaning project.

Anne, affectionately known as "TooTall", took on the project. This project entails hiring women in the shelter system to work in teams to go in and clean rooms, apartments and shared living accommodations for some of the most fragile of our society. Many who live "independently" are unable to cope with maintaining their homes due to illness, disability or mental health



problems. Living in isolation, their homes have deteriorated to the point where home care services are not feasible. But it's hoped that once a thorough cleaning takes place then appropriate services can be arranged to help them maintain the up-keep.

Before Peggy Ann could even decide whether Street Haven should take on the project, calls were coming in from landlords, health outreach workers and community care agencies requesting the service. The need for this project seems to be overwhelming.

The cleaning jobs were advertised through Street Haven and the response was great. Already the "crews" have been hired and special training sessions have been held on the safe use of the various cleaning products. The women have responded positively, excited about "getting right in there" and working. A few crew members have even taken it upon themselves to give Street Haven a little extra spit and polish as practice for their new jobs.

The Linda Houston Memorial Trust Fund for the Homeless

Linda Houston died this winter, seemingly alone.

But she did have a family, a family that did care. However for some reason Linda was not willing to take that help. To help other women like Linda, who for whatever reason find themselves on the street, the family members created the Linda Houston Memorial Trust Fund for the Homeless.

At the time of Linda's death, Street Haven helped in small ways to locate her family. In thanks, a donation was given. Street Haven is using the money to try and locate the family of a long time client who is very ill in a local hospital. Working on a few clues, advertisements were placed in several newspapers - something that could not have been done without this kind donation. To date, no family members have been located although the client continues to make reference to a son in her more lucid moments . . . little sparks of life are in her eyes when she talks about him. In the meantime, staff and volunteers continue to visit her daily in hospital taking small gifts and anything else they can think of to make her more comfortable.

> . . . to honour her memory by trying to help the people that are living as she lived.

A Memorial Trust Fund is a very special and lasting tribute to honour the life of someone you love.

Our Special Thanks ...

- *A Benefit Concert, presented by **Dr. Rathe**, Friday, January 23, 1998 at the Arts and Letters Club was a wonderful evening. Street Haven was very fortunate to have Dr. Rathe choose Street Haven to be the beneficiary of this concert. More than $2,000 was raised. Thank-you Dr. Rathe.*
- *Appreciation must also be extended to Anthony Rausch, **RBC Dominion Securities** for running a very successful fund raising raffle - and to the employees who bought the tickets. The prizes were tickets to the Rolling Stones concert and CD's, donated through Bill Banham, Virgin Music Canada. The raffle raised $2,075 which was given to Street Haven.*
- *The **Toronto Money Market Association** raised $700 through a charity pool tournament. Many thanks to the members for making this happen.*
- *A thank-you must go out to the staff at **Xerox Canada Ltd.**, who not only invited Peggy Ann and Madeline, program manager, to their staff Christmas party but made Street Haven the recipient of their funds and gifts. It's encouraging to have a corporation such as Xerox take a genuine interest in Street Haven's work.*

Honorary Patron

The Honourable Hilary Weston, Lieutenant Govenor of Ontario

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